

West Chester, PA – As Americans in increasing numbers seek end-of-life medical care, the number of hospice facilities has rapidly grown to meet demands. For these individuals, a comfortable, caring environment is of the utmost importance as they cope with terminal end-stage diseases. — Today, residents and healthcare providers in West Chester celebrated the opening of Chester County's first inpatient hospice facility, dedicated to the care of patients with end-stage diseases. The new 16-bed Inpatient Hospice Unit is part of Chester County's non-profit Neighborhood Health Agencies, which provides homecare, hospice, and private duty service to residents of Chester County and surrounding areas. None of Chester County's five hospitals offers such a facility, and it is the only center of its kind in the county.

Among those attending the ceremonial ribbon cutting was Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07), who said: "I offer my thanks to Neighborhood Health Agencies and other such organizations that take to heart the difficult task of caring for patients with end-stage illnesses. We live in an era when equity in healthcare is an imperative. I believe that it is critical to provide exceptional healthcare to Americans at all stages of their illnesses, terminal and otherwise."

He further noted Hubert Humphrey's often-cited remark that the moral test of a government lies in how that government treats not only the young and the healthy, but also "those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly; and those who are in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy and the handicapped."

Since taking office, Congressman Sestak has made the health and welfare of U.S. citizens a top legislative priority. Most recently, he voted to extend the number of low and middle-class American children covered under the State Children's Health Insurance Program to 10 million. Though President Bush vetoed this critical legislation, Sestak has vowed to continue to fight for a compromise and health coverage for all of America's children. He was also a strong supporter of the CHAMP Act, which would limit out of pocket costs for seniors, and ensure that seniors have access to the doctors of their choice. The bill also makes Medicare's preventive benefits more affordable by eliminating all co-payments and deductibles for these services, such as screening tests, screening for glaucoma, initial preventive physical examination, bone mass measurement, prostate cancer screening tests, and colorectal cancer screening tests, among others, while making it easier for Medicare to add new preventive benefits.

Additionally, Congressman Sestak has been at the forefront of the push to enact the Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act, which expands the Mental Health Parity Act of 1996 to require group health plans that offer benefits for mental health and addiction disorders to do so on the same terms as care for other diseases.

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on

Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the Congress.